

Message Text

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ACTION OES-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-10 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 HEW-04
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0430
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
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USMISSION GENEVA
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AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RANGOON

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 4619

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: TBIO, TPHY, IN
SUBJECT: INDIAN BAN ON EXPORT OF PRIMATES

REF: (A) STATE 71016; (B) NEW DELHI 3711; (C) GENEVA 4312

1. WE ARE CONCERNED AT THE INDICATION THAT WASHINGTON AGENCIES ARE CONSIDERING A HIGH-LEVEL BILATERAL APPROACH TO THE GOI ON THE MONKEY EXPORT BAN. FROM THIS PERSPECTIVE IT WOULD APPEAR THAT A BILATERAL APPROACH BY THE US WOULD BE THE STRATEGY LEAST LIKELY TO MAKE ANY IMPACT ON THE ONLY GOI OFFICIAL WHO REALLY MATTERS IN THIS ISSUE, PRIME MINISTER DESAI.

2. THE GOI HAD BANNED MONKEY EXPORTS TWICE IN THE PAST, ONCE IN 1955 UNDER NEHRU AND ONCE IN THE SUMMER OF 1977. FOLLOWING THE FIRST BAN, THE US AND INDIA CONCLUDED AN AGREEMENT UNDER WHICH THE US UNDERTOOK TO USE INDIAN
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MONKEYS ONLY FOR POLIO VACCINE AND MEDICAL RESEARCH, AND SPECIFICALLY AGREED NOT TO USE THEM IN MILITARY EXPERIMENTS OR IN ATOMIC BLAST EXPERIMENTS.

3. THE BAN INSTITUTED LAST DECEMBER, WHICH BECOMES EFFECTIVE NEXT MONTH, HOWEVER, WAS MADE AT THE PERSONAL INSISTENCE OF THE PRIME MINISTER, FOLLOWING REPRESENTA-

TIONS BY THE INTERNATIONAL PRIMATE PROTECTION LEAGUE AND THE HEAD OF THE INDIAN ANIMAL WELFARE BOARD WHICH WE UNDERSTAND SPECIFICALLY REFERRED TO THE USE OF INDIAN MONKEYS IN RADIATION EXPERIMENTS BY AFRI. REGARDLESS OF WHETHER THESE EXPERIMENTS ARE TECHNICALLY "ATOMIC BLAST", THE FACT THAT THEY INVOLVED LETHAL DOSES OF RADIATION AND HAVE BEEN PUBLICLY CONNECTED WITH THE NEUTRON BOMB HAS PUT THEM INTO THE FORBIDDEN CATEGORY ACCORDING TO INDIAN PERCEPTIONS. THUS THE US AND SPECIFICALLY THE US GOVERNMENT IS SEEN AS HAVING VIOLATED ITS AGREEMENT AND MISUSED MONKEYS IN WAYS OFFENSIVE TO INDIANS GENERALLY AND TO DESAI PERSONALLY.

4. REF B INDICATED THE VEHEMENCE OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S FEELINGS ON THIS SUBJECT. HE IS OPPOSED TO KILLING ANY LIVING CREATURE, AND HAS BEEN PUBLICLY QUOTED AS SAYING THAT HUMAN BEINGS HAVE NO RIGHT TO LIVE OFF OTHER LIVING BEINGS. HIS SENSE OF MORALITY IS APPARENTLY ENGAGED IN THIS ISSUE. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, WE REALISTICALLY SEE LITTLE LIKELIHOOD OF FLEXIBILITY DEVELOPING IN HIS POSITION. BUT AN APPROACH FROM THE "CHIEF CULPRIT" IS LIKELY SIMPLY TO MAKE HIM ANGRY, AND IN VIEW OF THE HISTORY OF THIS ISSUE AS SEEN BY THE INDIANS USG ASSURANCES OF THE USE TO WHICH MONKEYS WILL BE PUT WILL PROBABLY APPEAR SUSPECT.

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5. THUS WE STRONGLY SUPPORT THE APPROACH IN REF C. WHO HERE IS TRYING TO WORK WITH GOI HEALTH OFFICIALS TO SEE WHAT AVENUES WOULD GIVE BETTER CHANCES OF A FAIR HEARING BY THE PRIME MINISTER. IF THERE IS ANY CHANCE OF MODIFYING HIS STAND, WHO AND THE INDIAN HEALTH OFFICIALS ARE FAR MORE LIKELY TO DEVELOP IT THAN THE USG IS.
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